

THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Vol. XII

NOVEMBER 1957

No. 137

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL		194
HELL AND HEAVEN	Henry St John	196
THOSE THAT LIE IN THE SLEEP OF PEACE	Gerald Vann	204
MYSTICISMS	Thomas Gilby	210
BROTHER IVO POUSSIN OF BRICQUEBEC	Mary Jackson	218
ST AUGUSTINE'S SERMON ON PSALM XXXIII: III	Edmund Hill	223
KNOWLEDGE OF OUR END	Hugh Farmer	228
EXTRACTS		232
REVIEWS: Richard Blundell, Donald Proudman, Roland Potter, etc.		234

Contributors are encouraged to submit original MSS. or translations from the Fathers. *Literary Communications* to be addressed to The Editor, The Life of the Spirit, Hawkesyard Priory, Rugeley, Staffs. (Telephone: Armitage 240.) The Editor cannot be responsible for the loss of MSS. submitted, and no MS. will be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. *Subscriptions, Orders* and *Communications* regarding *Advertisements* should be addressed to the Manager, Blackfriars Publications, 34 Bloomsbury Street, London, W.C.1 (Museum 5728). Annual Subscription 25s. od. (\$3.50) post free. *Binding*: Orders and Enquiries for binding volumes of the review may be sent to the Kemp Hall Bindery, 33 St Aldate's, Oxford.

EDITORIAL

AT the beginning of November the commemoration of All Souls brings to mind the doctrine of Purgatory, and all that is involved in it. For us personally it involves responsibility for others we have known and loved, who have gone before us with the sign of faith and who, where they now are, may well be sadly needing our prayers and Masses. It also involves the prospect that in due time we shall ourselves be needing, as we cannot but fear, the charitable prayers of those we have left behind on earth.

At the end of November Advent is in sight. In preparation for it, on the last Sunday of the Church's year, our Lord with prophetic vision and speaking in the language of a long succession of Hebrew prophets, foretells his coming again to execute God's final judgment on the world and on ourselves. What makes this gospel mysterious and obscure is that Christ, as the Hebrew prophets his predecessors often did, spoke of a remote event in terms of one near at hand. He prophesied the final dissolution of the created universe as we know it, and God's judgment on it, in terms of the only less terrible destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, forty years after his death. God's judgment on his chosen people, who had not known the time of their visitation and had rejected their Messiah and Saviour, was a symbol of his final and universal judgment on the world.

Yet in this prophecy, couched in apocalyptic imagery representing, but not to be confused with, literal truth, one thing is wholly certain, a certainty we affirm in the creed at Mass: 'He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead.' In this way Advent brings us warning of judgment to come. That warning in its turn, if taken with the deep seriousness due to it, should make hell, please God, remotely, but purgatory immediately, a reality both for ourselves and those we love.

For if death overtakes us before the great and dreadful day (we tend quite unwarrantably to assume that it will), we shall be judged, as the Church teaches, at a *particular* judgment. That judgment will be personal and will decide our personal destiny. At the last day, however, the lives of all men will be judged in the whole context of God's completed plan. The final effect of

every life as it has been lived, and every action good or bad that it has produced, will be seen in its complete results. Those results reach far beyond the limits of individual lives or particular periods of history; for the repercussions of every human act may well be continuously effective down the ages until the consummation of time.

At the last great vindication of God's justice and mercy, before angels and men, a paean of praise will go up, from all his saved creation, because by his omnipotent power he has been able to bring good out of every evil. In a mysterious way the whole history of the world will be displayed like a vast and complex tapestry, millions upon millions of threads, each thread a human life, woven into a many-coloured and intricate pattern of God's designing. Every event, and God's purpose in every event, will be clearly visible, and in them the triumph of his love and power. Then will begin the fullness of the kingdom of God and his Christ; the blessed life so mysterious and unimaginable, only to be grasped here by us in faith.

It is inevitable, no doubt, that our own particular judgment should loom larger in our minds than this unimaginable and apparently remote consummation. For of all the certain things that happen to us particular judgment is the most certain. Even if we are alive at the last day our judgment will be a part of the general judgment, while if death is to be our lot we shall pass to our judgment at its supreme moment. There we shall stand before a tribunal where justice is certain; where there is no escape and no possibility of evasion. We shall see ourselves as we are, no longer with our own eyes, which so often deceive us. We shall see ourselves, for the first time, as God sees us; all make-belief, blindness, hypocrisy and self-deception stripped away. This thought is enough to make us pray constantly that at that moment of decision we may pass by God's mercy to a blessed purgatory.

Blessed, because we shall know that heaven is secure, we shall have had a glimpse of its meaning and depth such as on earth we never caught. But that glimpse will be the cause of intense pain, the pain of unfulfilled desire for the sole good we shall then long for with all the intensity of our being. The pain of that longing will be frustrating but purifying, the purifying fire of God's love, which purges and hurts in its purging, as it burns away the dross. It is a healing caustic.

In purgatory, we are told, there is duration, but not time as we know it in our present world of sense. God in his mercy gives us time here to become saints, and saints we must become if we are to fulfil our destiny. Fidelity to whatever obedience our vocation brings us makes us saints. Yet we shrink from faithfulness to that steady plodding, so often apparently unrewarding. We shrink because it is hard, ordinary and uninteresting. Do we think enough of purgatory, that unknown second stage of the life that is granted us, that lies between death and the vision of God? It may be a long dreary period of hard frustrating purification, all the harder because it is purely passive, a lonely waiting for what we long for so intensely, more rigorous and wearying in its demands than anything we could have suffered here. Yet necessary because of the graces we have neglected and the opportunities we have missed; necessary to fit us, as they would have done had we used them, for the vision of God's purity, the sharing of which will be our eternal joy and satisfaction.



HELL AND HEAVEN

HENRY ST JOHN, O.P.

IF we turn to the Scriptures, under the guidance of the teaching Church, for enlightenment concerning the doctrine of everlasting punishment, we shall find two things stated in them with painful clarity by our Lord himself. There is a final punishment for the unrepentant; it is eternal and it is fire. *If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished* (Mark ix, 42). And again: *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matt. xxv, 41-42). In the moving passage too, in St John's gospel, where our Lord sets out his teaching about himself as the way, the truth and the life, under the image of the vine and the branches, the same warning is contained; that burning by fire is the inevitable result of complete

separation from him. *I am the vine; you the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing. If any one abide not in me he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither: and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire and he burneth* (John xv, 5-6).

It is of course clear that this language is the language of imagery; the Johannine passage is expressly so, those from the synoptics trace back to the Jewish apocalyptic literature, in which the name Gehinnom, derived from the valley to the south of Jerusalem where the city's refuse was burned, was applied to the place where the wicked were punished. The Greek word *geenna* in the Marcan text, translated 'hell' in the English versions, comes from the Aramaic *Gehinnam*, the valley of Hinnom. This must have been the word used by our Lord, and the imagery associated with it was chosen by him as his way of teaching truth to his immediate hearers. We cannot doubt that he intended this way to be continued in use as the permanent standard by which that truth should be preserved and passed on down the ages. The Church, which is commissioned by Christ to do this passing on, has in fact defined very little about the doctrine of hell, but when it has defined it has always done so within the context and meaning of the key words used by our Lord: *eternal* and *fire*.

This does not mean that these words do not need interpretation. Our Lord used the common thought forms of his own age; these were readily adaptable to the understanding of his hearers. But thought forms change and develop in succeeding ages, and the thought forms of a past generation sometimes become obstacles in their literal acceptance, to a more perfect understanding of the truths they were designed to express, because the light shed on them by new scientific, historical or philosophical knowledge reveals their limitations. On this account the better and further-seeing minds in each generation seek to set the unchanging truths that Christ has revealed and his Church has defined, in a new context of contemporary thought. It is here that the scholars, in their various disciplines, play an important part. Their work is fruitful for the understanding of the Faith so long as it is carried out under the authoritative guidance of the Church's magisterium.

Thus all down the ages, from the New Testament until today, the dogma of Redemption has never changed in its essentials.

Yet its interpretation has varried greatly. During a long period of the Church's history, when the habit of mind of western civilization was predominantly legalistic, it was seen almost exclusively in forms of a penal substitutionary view of atonement, that has appeared inadequate and distorted to later ages. Similarly where the conception of a three-storyed universe held sway in men's minds, crude and materialistic ideas of heaven and hell were inevitable, and the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ and the great assize of the last Judgment were conceived in spatial and terrestrial terms. Even today we may think instinctively of hell in terms of physical agony prolonged in infinite succession; or we may picture it imaginatively as we have seen it depicted in some old book of devotion: a very material body devoured by very material flames and under torture from horrible serpents or devils. This crude horrific imagery, common in the past, can still unconsciously dominate our conceptions and disturb them.

There is then a dress in which successive generations must of necessity clothe the absolute and immutable truth of revelation. It is the dress of contemporary human ideas, a dress that is sometimes crude and primitive, sometimes more sophisticated; a dress that changes with the succession of discarded theories, but also with the genuine growth of rational knowledge. This process of change is inevitable, because God willed to reveal himself only through the medium of human minds, and, since the recipients of his truth are human also, never does he transcend by his omnipotence the limitations inherent in the nature of that mind. As Catholics we believe that the supreme teaching authority of the Church, though thus humanly limited, is nevertheless divinely safeguarded from error throughout this process. That is why we claim that those who place themselves under its guidance will be enabled to preserve and live by the essential truth of God's revelation, while labouring to perfect the human knowledge in the context of which, in any particular age, it must be set.

With these presuppositions in mind we can examine the teaching of the Church concerning the punishment of hell. It is by definition eternal, and it is fire. At once we realize that since it is eternal it must be *life* of a kind. God does not in fact annihilate his creation. Attempts have been made by devout non-Catholics to argue for conditional immortality. A saying of our Lord is sometimes alleged in support of this view: *Fear ye not them that*

kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both the soul and body into hell (Matt. x, 28). It is argued that natural immortality is a Greek not a biblical concept. In the Bible immortality is seen as God's gift in Christ. Disintegration of the human personality would follow as the natural result of the refusal of God's gift by persistence in sin.¹ Universalism too, as old as Origen, is attractive to the human heart; the belief that somehow all men will come at the last, whether in this life or the next, to crave for and accept God's mercy by true repentance. But the gift of free will is not subject to force by omnipotent power. God waits to be gracious; men can refuse to return to him; they do so persistently, why not for ever? This hard verdict of the head is the answer also to the question: why not a second chance on the farther side of death? Why must the end of this life fix for ever the will of man in submission or antagonism to God who made him. The ultimate answer to these questions is not however an answer of human reason, it is the answer of God's Word interpreting to us through the Church's authority the written word of Scripture.

The punishment of hell therefore, in Scripture and the teaching of the Church, is life of a kind, and it is eternal. It is the life given by nature, itself a gift of God. It is the necessary basis of God's other gift to us in Christ, the gift of supernatural life. When that gift is finally and irrevocably rejected the punishment which ensues falls upon the surviving life, that with which we were born. This life is of its nature eternal. It will be lived, that is, outside and beyond time. We can only begin to understand it therefore if we think of it first in terms of the loss of that sharing in the eternal life of God for which, by grace, he has destined us in Christ. St Paul expresses this truth in words beyond which it is hardly possible to go. He speaks of the Church which is Christ's body, and of which we are members as *the fullness of him who is filled all in all* (Eph. i, 23). And again: *that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts: that being rooted and founded in charity you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length, and height, and depth, to know also the charity of Christ, which*

¹ The Greek word translated destroy (*apolesai*) in Matthew 10, 28 and its Vulgate equivalent *perdere*, have this as their primary meaning. They are however both used to mean *to lose utterly without being destroyed*, notably in this same chapter of Matthew, v. 39. In its context therefore the Greek will not bear the meaning that this view seeks to place upon it.

surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God (Eph. iii, 17-19).

When that fullness is reached in the Beatific vision our finite being will be completed, perfected and wholly satisfied by the life of God that will be ours in Christ. There will be nothing more that we can desire or deserve, nothing that we can need. God, his goodness and love, will possess the whole of our being, in such a way that our life will be one of perfect happiness. Of course on earth we do not fully grasp its meaning; though grace has already begun this life in us, the glory that is its perfection is still hidden from our eyes. If we did comprehend it we should never hesitate, never look back, never fall away. We should leave nothing undone to secure this vision of God that is his ultimate gift to us. But we can know it in the obscure light of faith, we can see it with increasing clearness by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which act in answer to the charity in us as it breaks down the obstacles between ourselves and God.

We can even get glimpses of the utter joy of heaven by human analogies. We do experience human happiness, sheer and undiluted, for a fleeting moment or two. The happiness of being wholly absorbed in something outside ourselves; a story of intense and gripping interest, a breathtaking glimpse of scenery, an entrancing sunset, a piece of utterly joyful news, a moment of sheer self-giving in love; these for a space may occupy the whole of us to the exclusion of ourselves and all else besides. Then our total being is filled with the possession of that one thing only, in sheer concentration of joy; for an instant or two, and then it passes. That is a pale and momentary image of heaven. Heaven, the vision of God is all that, infinitely multiplied in intensity, contained in a single timeless instant that never moves; no looking forward, no looking back, a standing, unchanging instant that never passes. That is the meaning of being filled with all the fullness of God. Yet having said that we have said virtually nothing, mere words the reality of which only the Holy Spirit can show us; *for eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love him. But to us God hath revealed them by his spirit. For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God (1 Cor. ii, 9-10).*

Hell then is the loss of all this, the loss of God, who alone can fulfil and complete our finite being. It is to enter eternity and

yet to be separated there from God, separated by our own deliberate choosing. That separation would be more terrible than any imaginable suffering, for God is all that is and therefore the source of all happiness. Absence of God means nothingness, and nothingness is a terrible thought to contemplate. So the theologians teach us that hell reduces the sinner hardened and fixed in antagonism against God to an almost complete negative, the loss of all that is save bare existence; the *poena damni*. But we must not confine our thought of the punishment of hell to what is negative, an existence without God. That is no doubt its radical element. But God remains the Lord even of those who reject him; he created them in love, and, in the sense that his infinite will, as it has ever been, is that they should love him, he loves them still, even though their finite wills have become set in perpetual rejection of his love. The submission of the finite will causes the soul to be filled with all the fullness of God. God's love accepted thrills the whole structure of its being with the physical effect of its happiness. But with the will in rebellion, the soul is emptied of God's fullness. Antagonism to God's rejected love penetrates the very structure of its being with the physical effect of undying hatred. This is the *poena sensus* which the common teaching of the Church represents as a real, extrinsically caused pain in the lost soul, effected in it after the manner of material fire.²

For the image under which the God of love and his power are so often represented in the Scriptures is fire; from the burning bush of Exodus to the tongues of flame at Pentecost, and thence to the fire imagery of the Apocalypse. The fire of God's love when the created will finally accepts it in the Beatific vision, causes the soul, and, after the resurrection, the body through the soul, to become ardent and glowing with the glory of the fullness of divine life. But where it encounters in hell the antagonism of undying hate in the created will, there the soul, and with it one day the body, burns and consumes with the dark pain and frustration its cold hatred generates, a burning and consuming which is eternal. *Because the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, a jealous God* (Deut. iv, 24; Heb. xii, 29).

² This is only one of several speculations current among theologians as to the nature of the *poena sensus* of hell, which the Church, interpreting the *ipsissima verba* of Christ, insists upon as extrinsically caused, eternal and comparable with material fire.

We must realize that there is no time in hell, any more than there is in heaven. Everlasting punishment means not succession, but a standing instant; no past, no future, just a now of utter emptiness and frustration; of having lost all, and of hating, yet intensely needing, that which has been lost. We must believe that there can come a moment in the life of an immortal soul, created in God's image, loved by him and designed to share the glory of his presence, when by consistent and deliberate rebellion against the known truth, and wholly through its own responsibility, it becomes fixed and static in complete antagonism to God; from friendship it passes to perpetual enmity, from love, however intermittent, to hatred. When that state is reached there is no alternative to the state of separation, for to admit such a soul, were it possible, to the face-to-face vision of God, would be an even greater punishment than its eternal loss.

We must, as Catholics, face this teaching squarely and honestly; it is a possibility for each of us, but only if we forsake God utterly by giving ourselves utterly to self-apart-from-God. We must not run away from this, or try to forget it and the danger of it; or laugh it out of court, as the world around us does, in which the devil has become a joke. Father Martin D'Arcy, S.J., has said that the doctrine of hell and the fire of hell is the most unpopular and most misunderstood of the Church's teachings on the after life.³ Our world has rejected this doctrine wholesale, and in consequence the atmosphere around us is entirely obnoxious to it. Christ could not have spoken more plainly and decisively about it. Yet even where his authority is acknowledged, and God is still believed in, the conception of what God is becomes increasingly an idolatry; the projection upon him of the uncurbed wishful thinking of the human mind, which will make for itself a more comfortable god to worship, a god in its own image. We may well be thankful that the Church, because it is divinely guided and will not surrender to the false spirit of any age, has always tenaciously maintained this doctrine. Belief in hell is a salutary balancing element in our religion. It prevents us, as without it we easily may, from falling into sentimentality in our conception of God's love for us in redemption.

The Cross of Christ is a hard teaching; it is, and always has been, a stumbling block to many. But hell shows us why the

3 *Death and Life* (Longmans, 1942) page 128.

price of our salvation was fixed by God our Father at so high a rate; it keeps the real and terrible nature of sin before our eyes. It reminds us, when in his love God gives us a heavy cross to carry after his Son, that this cross is a small price to pay in comparison with the debt of sin; a small price by which to gain safety from hell. There was a time when the doctrine of hell occupied too prominent a place, perhaps, in Catholic pulpits because it was often preached in terms which overlaid God's love for us by fear of him. That time has passed, and we are now in danger of hearing too little of God's judgment upon sin. The truth of hell should always be thought of and preached in the context of God's love, for hell is inevitable apart from his loving acts in redemption. It is Catholic doctrine that retribution is a real property even of human justice, but that our limited and fallible sentences should be of a mixed character, both curative and vindictive. But to God belongs the supreme power of exercising a justice that is wholly and finally retributive. Today we have gone far to domesticate God, and men, even in acknowledging his existence, are prepared to deny to him this supreme power of vindicating his infinite majesty. This denial has been perhaps, more than anything else, the cause of the almost total disappearance of belief in hell.

Towards the end of the first half of the last century, when the first steps towards this denial were being taken, they were made by devout believers such as F. D. Maurice, unguided by the firm teaching of the Catholic Church, but imbued with a deep reverence for our Lord's words, the teaching of the Scriptures and the tradition of past ages. They started by calling in question tentatively and with much hesitation, current teaching in the Church of England and the Free Churches concerning the nature of everlasting punishment. Maurice regarded universalism as too easy a solution, taking too little account of the weight of sin. Some words of his written in 1849 show nevertheless how crude was the background of thought against which the traditional position was currently held. He speaks of reaching the conclusion after much hesitation that the word *aionios*, translated 'eternal' or 'everlasting' in the gospels, did not mean endless temporal succession. 'Eternal' and 'temporal' must be distinguished. Eternal life is to know the love of God; not to know it is death. Eternal punishment, whatever else it means cannot mean

never-ending torments. For the rest he refused to dogmatize.⁴

Maurice and his contemporaries were much influenced in these doubts and hesitations by theories of the Atonement that appeared to them to make of God an arbitrary tyrant. Such theories were partial and one-sided explanations of a revealed truth, some puzzles in which can be penetrated under grace by prayer and thought, though the ultimate mystery contained in it will always be beyond the full grasp of human understanding. But once these questions had been raised, since with these men the voice of the Catholic Church was not decisive, belief in eternal punishment was pushed more and more into the background. By 1874 the famous Congregationalist preacher and theologian Dr R. W. Dale was able to write of his own co-religionists: 'The doctrine of our forefathers has been silently relegated, with or without serious consideration, to that province of the intellect which is the house of beliefs which we have not rejected, but which we are willing to forget.'⁵ That might not unjustly be held to describe the attitude of not a few Catholics today, and it is to our loss that it is so.



THOSE THAT LIE IN THE SLEEP OF PEACE

GERALD VANN, O.P.

WHEN, in the Mass, we pray for the dead we speak of them as 'sleeping in the sleep of peace'. There seems to be an echo here of our Lord's words, 'The maid is not dead but sleepeth', and again of his use of the same verb when speaking of Lazarus. Chrysostom suggests that he is telling his followers not to be afraid of death; and perhaps he is contrasting two very different ideas of the after-life: the grey, wraith-like half-existence of Sheol or Hades with the christian idea of fulfilment, glory, peace. Certainly nowadays we need to be taught not

⁴ *Belief and Unbelief Since 1850*. H. G. Wood (Cambridge, 1955), page 30. For a very interesting letter discussing this matter written in 1849 by F. J. A. Hort to Frederick Maurice see *The Life and Letters of Fenton J. A. Hort*, vol. I, page 116. (Macmillan).

⁵ *Life of R. W. Dale*, by A. W. Dale (Hodder and Stoughton, 1894), p. 312.

to fear death: in earlier days it was the sex-words which were taboo; now the taboo has been transferred to the death-words, and one must speak not of dying but of passing on or away or even over.

But the 'sleep of peace' in the *Memento* refers specifically to purgatory; and seems to contrast very oddly with other traditional ideas about the 'suffering souls', and with the view of St Augustine and that 'the least pain of purgatory is greater than the greatest suffering in this world'.¹ On the one hand the flames, the torment; on the other the peace, the beautiful flowered meadow which the seer in Bede's *History* took to be heaven.

In fact, if we are to form a true concept of the state of the holy souls, we need both pictures. On the one hand the earthly struggle is over, and with it the gnawing uncertainty, the fear that we shall fail in the end to save our souls; the infinite bliss and rapture of God can be looked forward to with joy as something assured. So the *Purgatorio* begins with the approach of dawn, and the poet describes how

'Sweet hue of sapphire, that was spread
O'er the serene aspect of the pure air,
High up as the first circle, to mine eyes
Unwonted joy renew'd.'

In this world we know indeed the keen joy of anticipating joy, but there is always the fleck of fear lest our anticipations be frustrated or at least, as so often happens, that the reality prove less of a delight than we had hoped. In purgatory it is the other way round: there is utter assurance both that heaven is won and that its happiness must infinitely exceed anything that could have been imagined. So the words of Gerontius,

'I went to sleep; and now I am refreshed.
A strange refreshment: for I feel in me
An inexpressive lightness, and a sense
Of freedom, as I were at length myself,
And ne'er had been before',

are followed by the triumphant song of the angel:

'My work is done
My task is o'er,
And so I come,
Taking it home,

¹ *Sum. Theol. Suppl.* lxxii, 1.

For the crown is won,
Alleluia
For evermore.'

'I do not believe it would be possible', writes St Catherine of Genoa, 'to find any joy comparable to that of a soul in purgatory, except the joy of the blessed in paradise—a joy which goes on increasing day by day, as God more and more flows in upon the soul, which he does abundantly in proportion as every hindrance to his entrance is consumed away.'²

But this consuming process is itself torment. There is first of all the sense of loss: when Gerontius asks whether he will see his Master when he reaches the throne the angel replies

'Yes, for one moment thou shalt see thy Lord.
One moment; but thou knowest not, my child,
What thou dost ask: that sight of the Most Fair
Will gladden thee, but it will pierce thee too.'

That is the first torment: the momentary ecstatic glimpse is vouchsafed but then is of necessity withdrawn since the soul is, in its sinfulness, incompatible with it. And the second torment lies in the blinding recognition of that sinfulness, of its hideousness and horror. So Gerontius cries

'Take me away, and in the lowest deep
There let me be':

for the sinner, however penitent, however much he loves God, knows the terror of God, knows that he cannot approach him till all the sin is consumed away and love and Love are made one.

Thirdly there is the *poena sensus*, the torment of the purgatorial fire. The exact meaning of this fire, and of the suffering it causes, is obscure, and opinions differ: some think of the fire literally, as material flames, others take it metaphorically; the Church has made no pronouncement on the subject.³ As Dr Bernhard Bartmann writes: 'We must distinguish between the existence of purgatory and the existence of punishment by fire; the former is defined as a dogma, the latter is not. There is no definition in regard to the nature of the pains of purgatory and there exists no certain dogmatic teaching on the subject. . . . No scholastic asserts that existence of such a fire is revealed truth. Neither is it

2 Cf. Mother Mary St Austin: *The Divine Crucible*, p. 61.

3 The *Gasparrri Catechismus Catholicus* defines the *poena damni* and *poena sensus* simply as the temporary privation of the vision of God and 'other grievous sufferings'.

possible to infer it from some other dogma.’⁴ St Thomas takes the literal view, but explains the action of the fire simply in terms of detention or restriction (for obviously flames cannot burn what is immaterial). ‘Although of its nature’, he writes, ‘a corporeal thing is able to confine an incorporeal spirit to a place, it is not able of its nature to detain an incorporeal spirit in the place to which it is confined, and so to tie it to that place that it be unable to seek another, since a spirit is not by nature in a place so as to be subject to place. But the corporeal fire is enabled as the instrument of the vengeance of divine justice thus to detain a spirit; and thus it has a penal effect on it, by hindering it from fulfilling its own will, that is by hindering it from acting where it will and as it will.’ So, he concludes, the soul ‘is tormented by the fire’ by being ‘enchained as it were’ by it.⁵

Whatever view one takes, however, of the nature of the fire there is no question about its aptness as a symbol. Baron von Hügel pointed out how, at the basis of all St Catherine of Genoa’s teachings about purgatory, there is the assumption of ‘the essential unity and continuity of the soul’s life here and hereafter’,⁶ so that she sees purgatory simply as the continuation of the purgatorial process begun in this life. Now the mystics again and again describe that process in terms of fire burning away dross or alloy; St Catherine herself speaks of the ‘rust of sin’ being burnt away by the fire so as to lay the soul more and more open to the rays of God their true Sun.⁷ Here you have that ambivalence which explains how purgatory can be at the same time both joy and sorrow: to quote Newman again, the divine effluence scorches and shrivels the soul so that it lies ‘consumed yet quickened by the glance of God’.

And though the fire ‘detains’ the soul, this does not mean that the soul enters it unwillingly; on the contrary, as St Catherine says, it ‘swiftly and of its own accord casts itself in’.⁸ And she sees the fire too as an inner impetus and impulse: ‘When a soul approaches more and more to that stage of original purity and innocence in which it had been created, the instinct of God, bringing happiness in its train (*istinto beatifico*), reveals itself and

⁴ *Purgatory*, p. 126; cf. Mother Mary St Austin, *op. cit.* pp. 19–20.

⁵ *Sum. Theol. Suppl.* lxx, 3.

⁶ *The Mystical Element of Religion*, vol. 1, p. 281.

⁷ Cf. E. Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 202.

⁸ Cf. Hügel, *op. cit.* p. 287.

increases on and on, with such an impetuousness of fire that any obstacle seems intolerable.⁹ Thus the Fire is God adored and God purifying; it is also the transforming process within the soul. 'The joy of a soul in purgatory goes on increasing day by day, owing to the inflowing of God into the soul'; the still imperfect soul is like a covered object which 'cannot respond to the rays of the sun which beat upon it . . . because the covering intervenes.' Now 'sin is the covering of the soul; and in purgatory this covering is gradually consumed by the fire; and the more it is consumed, the more does the soul correspond and discover itself to the divine ray'.¹⁰ So, in the end, it becomes itself Fire, in that mysterious identification with and absorption into the divine life which yet leaves the created personality intact.

The continuity of the purifying and transforming process in this life and the next, the thought of the torment-aspect of purgatory and the helplessness of the holy souls to shorten its duration, all this underlines for us the importance of the exhortations of the spiritual writers to do penance and purify ourselves as far as may be in this world. If we could see here and now the horror of sin we should perhaps not sin at all; but we are blind, and can blind ourselves further, and so we not only sin but become con-naturalized with sin. We must suppose that the roots of a long-cherished evil habit must go very deep—or, to use St Catherine's metaphor, the rust on a soul long neglectful of God must be very thick—and the purifying process will need to be a very lengthy one. The holy souls cannot sin, but neither can they accelerate the process of purgation. With us it would seem to be the other way round: in our weakness we cannot fail to sin, but we can do something to counteract the sin and its effects: we can, through prayer, sorrow, ascetical practices, growth in the virtues, come a little closer to that state of love without which heaven is closed to us.

But the fire-symbolism underlines something else for us: the purifying and transforming process is essentially though not exclusively a passive one. It is God the Fire who purifies; the soul which is purified. Perhaps one should say that the process is *receptive* rather than passive, for of course the process will not go on unless the soul actively wills it; but it is a will to accept the

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 288.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 290-291.

Fire—we are back at de Caussade's definition of holiness as willing what comes to us at each moment by God's order—and all the ascetical and pious practices on which we might be tempted to rely would be of little avail unless above all we were trying to make this our fundamental attitude and praying for the grace to succeed. And indeed how can we hope to achieve even the first step in the ascetical or purgative way, the simplest beginnings of mortifications and self-dominance, unless the grace of God works in us to impel us to do so. The holy souls have all the single-minded and intense longing for God which we in our worldiness lack; to have something of that longing must be our first prayer, for otherwise we shall lack the will to accept the Fire, we shall fail to see or feel the need to mortify ourselves because we shall fail to see that 'all those self-regarding instincts—so ingrained that they have become automatic—which impel the self to choose the more comfortable part' . . . 'are gross infringements of the law of love'.¹¹

If with us the fundamental attitude is the passive or receptive one, while at the same time we must also be 'busy about many things' in our attempt to order our lives, with the holy souls, as we have seen, it is otherwise: they must be wholly passive. Hence their need of our prayers, and our duty to offer them. We owe that duty primarily to those who were nearest to us in this life, for whom we were most responsible or to whom we ought to be most grateful; but the Church encourages us to pray for all the souls in purgatory in general, which means a far vaster number than those who at their death were formally Catholics or even Christians; and perhaps there is a special rightness in praying sometimes particularly for those souls who have none to pray for them personally because their families and friends have no belief in the efficacy of prayer for the dead.

Gerontius sings of how he must

'the lone night-watches keep,

Told out for me.

There, motionless and happy in my pain,

Lone, not forlorn—

There will I sing my sad perpetual strain,

Until the morn.'

'Happy in my pain': we return to the point from which we began;

¹¹ E. Underhill, *op. cit.* p. 220.

they sleep in the sleep of peace. The gentleness of Fauré's *Requiem* seems closer to the spirit of the *Memento* than do the majesty and terror of Verdi's *Dies Irae* for all its stupendous beauty; and Newman's poem too, and Elgar's music, strike at the end the same note:

'Softly and gently, dearly-ransomed soul,
 In my most loving arms I now enfold thee
 And o'er the penal waters, as they roll,
 I poise thee, and I lower thee, and hold thee. . . .
 Angels, to whom the willing task is given
 Shall tend and nurse, and lull thee, as thou liest:
 And Masses on the earth, and prayers in heaven,
 Shall aid thee at the throne of the Most Highest.
 Farewell, but not for ever, brother dear,
 Be brave and patient on thy bed of sorrow;
 Swiftly shall pass thy night of trial here,
 And I will come and wake thee on the morrow.'



MYSTICISMS

THOMAS GILBY, O.P.

THE Church is like a noble house and estate, and we are welcome to the run of it—to wander through the apartments, explore the galleries and secret courts, go roof-climbing, sample the cellars, walk in the garden, exclaim at the vistas, inspect the stables, swim in the lake, take our ease, and contemplate the domain stretching to the distance, over the hills and far away. *Non est hic aliud nisi domus Dei et porta caeli*. And it is our home. Of course we know that in a sense, but in fact are we not inclined to think of it as National Trust and behave like respectful trippers? The motor-coaches crunch on the gravel and we follow the guide inside, stare at some of the treasures, buy our postcards and then have tea.

That is a parable, not an allegory, certainly not meant to scold but only to suggest how much is missed if our religious life

remains at the stage where our minds consult the guide-book and our wills dutifully respond with the appropriate appreciation. For we are invited to settle in, and furthermore to feel that we have settled in. True, what matters above all is that we should cleave to God through faith, hope and charity, not that we should undergo their emotional resonances. What St Thomas calls the *redundantia* of grace from the higher to the lower powers is not essential, and great will be the reward of those who loyally, as we say, practise their religion, despite the fact that for some reason or another, whether of outward circumstances or temperamental humour or trial sent from heaven, they cannot screw themselves to feel genial or enter into the spirit of the party or reckon themselves to be devout. They are good, but just not so free and easy as perhaps they might be.¹ Let them not worry, but remind themselves with St Paul, *I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified; but he the judgeth me is the Lord.*²

All the same we are not naked minds and wills, nor just the subjects of duties. *Thou has clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me about with bones and sinews.*³ Nor are we merely the rational animals studied by the moralists, who rightly concentrate on our human acts, that is on our deliberate and responsible doing of right or wrong.⁴ These occupy only a middle area between the regions of infra-rational nature from which we are drawn and of supra-rational grace to which we are bidden. We belong to both, by birth to the first and by baptism to the second; neither however can be adequately explicated by a system of rational concepts or be adequately desired or enjoyed by a series of choices.⁵ It follows that each of us is a potential mystic. *My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*⁶

Unfortunately mysticism has become rather a *chichi* term associated sometimes with the heroic and sometimes with the morbid, with an élite of adventurers beyond the bounds of workaday life or with the depressed classes of victims of the

1 *Summa Theologica*. 1a-2ae. iii, 3; iv, 2, 6; v, 3; xxiv, 3; lvi, 4; lix, 1, 2, 3, 5; lxvi, 4; lxxvii, 1; cxii, 5; 2a-2ae. xxviii, 2, 4.

2 1 Cor. iv, 4.

3 Job x, 11.

4 1a-2ae. i, 1; xviii, 2, 3, 4.

5 1a. lxxxiii, 4; 1a-2ae. lxviii, 1; 2a-2ae. ii, 3.

6 Ps. lxxxiii, 2.

abnormal. In fact mystics may be either or neither or both, for, to anticipate for a moment, holiness is for the sick and healthy-minded alike. *Bring in hither the poor and the maimed, and the halt and the blind.* In the end it was the wedding-garment that counted.⁷

Etymologically a mystical experience implies an encounter when the eyes or lips are closed. It is extended to indicate any spiritual contact with a reality which can neither be portrayed or signified by images or ideas nor be talked about as though it lay in the grasp of our commonsense and reason. It deals with a mystery, and presumably an important one. But when we say that a mystery should be left as a mystery it does not mean to say that we should leave it alone. We could not even if we would. We cannot—to adapt William James—prematurely close our account with reality. The most dry-as-dust rationalist is advised not to remain suspended for long between the good earth and the better heaven, for while he does his discourse is without humour and without hope.

See then how plumb ordinary is the condition of responding to the reality that extends below and above the points of what we call our clear sensations and rational awareness, our distinct emotions and definite options. How extraordinarily flat and unseaworthy would be a surface vessel imagined without draft or top-hamper at all. The psychologists, then, are not being wanton when they insist on the importance of the unconscious below the levels of consciousness, nor are the prophets just quaint when they proclaim what is above. As naval constructors have gone on to build submarines and aircraft carriers, so mystics are those who, not content inside the petty limits of the rational self, seek an enlarged experience either by plunging to depths too dark for analysis or by mounting to where the light is too bright.

We may note at once that the spatial and temporal analogies, of below and above and before and after the reason, should not be pressed, as though, superior to the brutes but inferior to the angels, we were too worthy for one and too unworthy for the other. Extremes tend to meet, and in our life of companionship with God what we think are our reasons can sometimes be more of a hindrance than our instincts are. *Thou hast beset me behind and before. Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee*

7 Luke xiv, 21; Matt. xxii, 12.

from thy presence? If I climb into heaven, thou art there; if I go down to hell, behold thou art there also.⁸

Mysticism is a conglomerate term including quite disparate activities some of which are valuable only in a Pickwickian sense. It is like an artichoke which has to be peeled off leaf by leaf. Here we cannot take all, so a few must suffice. Let us then distinguish, in the approved scholastic manner, between mode and object; and then among objects between God and creatures; and finally among creatures between the collectivity, the demons, and yourself.

The concepts of reasoned consciousness and the choices of deliberate will are somehow in abeyance during a mystical experience. The subject is not aware that his ordinary self is thinking about something or is responsible for what is happening. Whatever the antecedent circumstances or the surround, the activity is not cogitative and not controlled. Frenzied or tranquil, lurid or luminous, describe it you will, it works differently from transactions when men are being intelligent, generous and useful—or the reverse—according to their station in life. So much for the *mode* of mysticism.

Now comes the more important question. What does it reach or hold, in other words, what is its content or form or *objectum*? Drinking is one mode of activity, but after all cocoa and claret provide for quite dissimilar human situations. Similarly all mystical experiences may share the same mode of activity, but there is a deal of difference between sinking yourself in Nature, consorting with spirits, resting in the bigger self behind your little ego, and being lifted up by God to himself. Because we escape from our individual earthbound existence it does not follow that we find an identical refuge. Because an experience can be obtained, whether by drugs, discipline, spells, or grace, which transcends the particularity and separateness of sensation and reasoned thought it does not follow that it is always in the same boat. Because both leave the surface a submarine and a naval aircraft are not equivalent.

Nevertheless the common factor of release from the humdrum ego has caused many writers on the subject to hold as a platitude that all mystical experiences are variations on one theme and amount to the same thing in the end. This, a genteel form of the

⁸ Ps. cxxxviii, 4, 7.

non-denominational fallacy that it is irrelevant what religion you belong to so long as you are sincere, does not bear the examination of an expert in the field of comparative mysticism.⁹ The differences strike deeper than literary expression, nor is it only that, when recollected, mystical experiences are toned and rationalized by diverse theologies or no theology at all, or that their after-effects take diverging courses.

Funny, asked the child—do you mean funny queer or funny smile? We mean the last, for there is nothing odd about the perennial quest for happiness beyond reason. We are speaking about the high road of mysticism, not the by-ways of the occult where dwell the sorcerers and the practitioners of magic both black and white. Preternatural phenomena, about which Fr Herbert Thurston wrote so well, have little to tell us about the going of man to his eventual home. Superstitious when sham and often dangerous when genuine, their cultivation is an attempt to break out of the providential order established in our lives into another world, a world which is still that of creatures. Better the devil we know, than the devil we don't.¹⁰

Professor Zaehner discovers three main groups of mystical experience. They are not, of course, stock types which allow of no variation, nor are they exclusive. Distinct headings for his orderly study, they are justified by his examination of the facts.

9 *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane*. An Inquiry into some Varieties of Praeternatural Experience. By R. C. Zaehner, Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at the University of Oxford. (Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press; 42s.)

This book, which prompts this article, is heartily recommended to all who seriously reflect on the life of prayer, and to the librarians of religious communities. The author's own informed convictions of the truth of orthodox Catholic principles do not dispose him to the grinding of axes. Perhaps he betrays some temper against Mr Aldous Huxley, concludes too easily that Master Eckhart was an intermittent monist and that the condemned propositions reproduced his teachings, and is too roughly Western about some Eastern techniques and doctrines. These are but minor corrugations.

It will, I think, prove a freshener to those who may ruefully confess that they are growing rather bored with minor classics belonging to the conventional genre of spiritual reading. Their eyes will be opened and their hearts warmed to Christian truths reinforced from traditions outside Christendom. They will find nothing to emulsify their assent to the dogmatic teaching of the Church. They will appreciate the cautious use of Jungian psychology to illustrate the aptness of the Christian mysteries. Passing the mescaline palace of Mr Aldous Huxley, the patiently and exquisitely contrived foundations left by Proust and the heroic perversion eventually rejected by Rimbaud, they will come to the temples of India and to the Muslim world which derives both from Christianity and Hinduism and is stressed between them. At the end they will see again their own house of which we spoke at the beginning of this article. Their own—and everybody's.

10 1a. cxiv, 4; cxv, 5; 2a-3ae. clxxi, 5, 6; clxxviii, 2.

Let us call them, briefly and too bluntly, absorption in Nature, isolation in yourself, and communion with God.

The first is not necessarily religious at all, hence the epithet 'pantheistic' is not applicable. It may be a phase in the life of a lucky believer, indeed such happy moments are commoner and humbler in real life than when they are written up in purple passages. It may also go with indifference to God, or with denial or defiance. To say that it is a transmarginal awareness when the sense of one's separateness from things is swept away is putting it badly. The passages from the poets, Wordsworth for instance, customarily cited are probably only threshold impressions of what is enjoyed by nature-mystics and 'enthusiasts', and which sometimes can be like the manic pole of what we now call a manic-depressive psychosis, the 'expansion' set off by the sick 'contraction'.¹¹

Drunkenness is a commonplace in mystical terminology, and this stage of mystical experience can be induced by drugs. The author's own experience was that mescaline led him into a universe of farce, and he is rightly suspicious of all artificial paradises, certainly as 'religion surrogates'. Then again, a case of the classical connection between asceticism and mysticism, it may be the result of intense discipline; this may be an effort of integration—and so Proust was rewarded with an intimation of immortality in a *petite madeleine* dipped in tea—or of taking the calculated risks of an excursion into madness. Finally it may be a visitation such as happened to Aristotle's fortunate man, taken by St Thomas as the natural paradigm to inspiration by the Gifts of the Holy Ghost.¹²

The second type of experience, in so far as it goes with a cosmic monism, consists in withdrawing into yourself. What is sought is the complete isolation of the self from all objects: there is the All, outside is illusion, no claim to union with God is advanced. If he appears then it is only as a provisional instrument of liberation. You may sing hymns, but when you have found true contemplation then you no longer have need of them. The condition has been described by M. Gardet as 'en-stasy' rather than ecstasy; it is like a deep dreamless sleep. All is indistinction and the human

¹¹ The treatise on the emotions has much to say in this connection, 1a-2ae. xxii-xlvi. Note xxxiii, 1 on *dilatatio*.

¹² T. Gilby. *Poetic Experience*. An Introduction to Thomist Aesthetic. (London, New York, 1934.) 1a-2ae. lxviii, 1.

soul itself comes to be identified with the ground of all being.

The third type, found in Christian, Muslim and some Indian teaching, has quite another emphasis. Though it may border on pantheism to one side, it does not seek to dwell in blissful emptiness but to find God who is loved for himself, God who also reveals himself in so many forms. Here there is a new note, of tenderness for little things, not from weakness but from strength. The world is seen as God's and who are we to scorn what he has created? Thus Ramakrishna: 'I say "Narayana in the form of an honest man, Narayana in the form of a swindler, Narayana in the form of a villain, Narayana in the form of a lewd person". Now the problem is how I can entertain all. I wish to feed everyone. Therefore I keep one at a time with me and entertain him.'

And entertain him. 'Here', says Professor Zaehner, 'we meet with something not met with hitherto in all our wearisome pilgrimage through "nature mysticism", "reversion to the unconscious", "positive and negative inflation", "individuation", "integration", and all the rest. We meet with simple human goodness, a quality that none of our ecstasies . . . have notably exhibited¹³.' This seems to be confined to theist mystics when they are speaking at the top of their form; others are virtuous and cherishing but not, as it were, *ex professo* when they are inculcating consummate perfection. *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him*¹⁴. This however is not doctrine for the far away. *For I was an hungered and you gave me meat, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came unto me*¹⁵.

The Church has always been vigilant about incomplete and false mysticisms. The Blessed Jan van Rousbroek knew nothing of Jungians or Sufis or Yogins or Vedantins; he lived in the fourteenth century, yet he is still right on the mark. He writes of men who 'remain in mere passivity without the performance of any work directed up towards God or down towards men. They have advanced beyond all exercises and virtues. I hope that few such will be found, but such as are, they are the evillest and most harmful men alive, and it is hard for them to be converted.'

¹³ *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane*, p. 132.

¹⁴ I John iv, 16.

¹⁵ Matt. xxv, 35-6.

From Islam comes the same message. 'There is a doctrine', warns Junyayd, 'proclaimed by those who teach *the falling away of works*. A fornicator or a thief is better off than people who talk like that.' Ghazali declares 'there is no doubt at all that such persons should be killed even though there may be a difference of opinion about their eternal punishment in hell'.

The *Cloud of Unknowing* tells us that the devil hath his contemplatives as God hath his, and St Thomas speaks of the diabolic sin of substituting yourself for God¹⁶. *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how are thou cut down to the ground. For thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the most High*¹⁷. Let the contemplative remember the warning of the room empty, swept and garnished¹⁸. Charity is the heart of holiness, not an emptying yourself of all images, not a strange knowledge beyond the ways of men¹⁹. *Though I speak with the tongue of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal*²⁰. It is an understatement.

If we find God it is all his doing. You cannot delight in God, says Qushayri, before God delights in you. Could there be a better summary of the teaching of St Augustine and St Thomas on grace? God's love above all, but that extinguishes nothing except sin. Does it not rather load us with creaturely burdens? How well one can sympathize with the contemplative's sigh, 'God is fine, but it's a pity he's mixed up with religion.' There speaks love and humour and acceptance. And a sense of proportion. For *religio* after all is concerned with apparatus and worship. It is not like the theological virtue of charity which goes directly to God himself²¹. By all means let us forget ourselves, for we are indeed our worst enemy and preoccupation with the self is the source of all unhappiness, so long as we remember that it is not in extinction that God is found. He is not in sleeping or in watching, reflected an anonymous English mystic, not in fasting or in feasting, but betwixt.

16 1a. lxiii, 3.

17 Isa. xiv, 12, 14.

18 Matt. xii, 44. Luke xi, 25.

19 2a-2ae. clxxxiv, 1.

20 I Cor. xiii, 1.

21 2a-2ae. lxxxi, 5. xxiii, 7. xxv, 1. 1a-2ae. lxx, 4.

BROTHER IVO POUSSIN OF BRICQUEBEC 1902-1928

MARY JACKSON

BRROTHER IVO was a Trappist lay-brother at Bricquebec who died in 1928, aged twenty-six, and seems to join that rare company who reached finished holiness in their twenties. But for us, this so recently dead-and-gone young man of the white-collar class turned Trappist is significant—or a ‘sign’ not to be ignored. For here is one who reached high holiness via being football secretary to a Young Men’s Club, via clerking before and during his national service, and then by four years as a Trappist lay-brother, first in charge of white rabbits, and then consumptive. There was, indeed, something of the picturesque and even the melodramatic in this young man’s shipwreck and his pilgrimage in the Holy Land, but his sanctity grew straight and fast throughout both the banal and the picturesque. Here is a modern work of art—God’s art and Brother Ivo’s; each, indeed, ‘amalgamating disparate material’ (in Eliot’s phrase about a poet’s mind), each also, ‘surrendering himself to the work to be done’. (Eliot again.)

Brother Ivo ‘made it’, in another sense of the phrase. His motto was ‘escalade aux cimes’, ‘on and up to the top’, and he reached that terribly accomplished spiritual poise, a mountaineer’s sort of poise that is a very high form of ‘abandon’. This young man is, then, a sign for us in two ways: classically and fast he grew in holiness right in some of the most banal of modern contexts, and—notably through suffering—he reached high ‘abandon’, that especial burning-glass of vocation to sanctity in the modern world.

In 1919 a motherless young Breton of seventeen, abounding with energy, from a Catholic home and parish life, indeed, but educationally with only the lay secondary modern school behind him joined the young men’s club—l’Oeuvre St Louis de Gonzague, in Rennes. Young Poussin was interested in religious matters, about which he learnt much and rapidly from the club library and from the chaplain. A keen footballer, he presently became organizing football secretary, and ran the job on interior charity, as

those French scouts and sports secretaries very well understand how. Thus, too, the intensely active life of club meetings, football, rehearsals, study circles and choral practices, all after office hours, was, in fact, so intense because it was high-powered by a life of increasingly steady prayer and self-denial. During these packed, short years young Poussin's ardour was noted, loved and tempered by the nuns of the La Sagesse convent in the town. Then in March 1922 his elder brother became a Trappist at Bricquebec, and two months later young Poussin was called up to do his National Service.

Young Poussin, appointed instructor in an infantry regiment, thereupon spent his leave from the barracks at Bricquebec; and both these disparates, the barracks and Bricquebec, were a dislocation from the usual world, but Marcel Poussin's own vocation had not yet precipitated. A catalyst was needed—and forthcoming, with power. In less than six months Marcel Poussin was sent off to Syria, alone, 'like a tourist!', and then, at six-fifteen a.m. on the 6th December, sailing in the sea of Marmora, a fire broke out on board the troopship and was rapidly out of control.

Marcel was presently in the water, clutching to a raft, gulping water. Publicly there, he vowed himself to God. But this was a little vague. The raft still lurched and dipped and seemed to be going under, and Marcel offered himself as a victim for the peace of the world and promised that he would be a Trappist at Bricquebec if he were rescued. A few minutes later along came an American destroyer. The catalyst had worked.

Now was the way clear. The time not spent at his work at Army Stores, Beirut, Marcel Poussin spent in prayer and study, using the courses given by the Jesuits at the University, and attending Youth Circles also. He also practised that private apprenticeship to the Trappist austerities. There were barrack complications to this; practical jokes, barracking of the meekened 'coq celtique'; night rising passed off as patrol duty, and so on; and there in the barracks, in the mosquito-ridden marshes of Beirut, Marcel studied the Directory of the Trappists, and meditated his unworthiness of the Cistercian vocation as 'jeune homme du siècle'—as a modern young man.

The eight days' leave at the end of the period of national service were spent in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land next door, and are days of a lyrical beauty, of a modern *fioretti* quality. The

young Breton-French soldier, long ago compared for vivacity to an electric battery, already in poor health, already in mind and burningly a Trappist, bumps over the Lebanese landscape in a car with a bunch of nuns. The banal begins to fall away. He went straight to Bricquebec from the repatriation camp, not daring to go home on the way, and entered as a laybrother.

Marcel Poussin plunged, then, into that crucifying tension that is the Cistercian design—perpetual silence observed in a perpetually common life. The silence is absolute so as to ensure that one is alone with God, although perpetually in the presence, if not the society of others. One does not even sleep alone, unless consumptive; one talks only to one's director. This Trappist pattern is cruciform; a most subtle draining of the self-love which might find root-room in either privacy or chatter; a pattern insupportable without a clinging of the drained self to God. And this is the cruciform tension drawn and locked, in peace, and for life.

A photograph of Brother Ivo Poussin suggests, now a young man strikingly impressive and attractive. The head is of beautiful bone structure, broad and deep; the moulding of nose, lips and chin very firm and shapely, the eyes notably alert and grave; the whole very vital and virile, sensitive and ardent. There is no pride in the face, but this Brother Ivo of 'la nature bouillante' recognizes that obedience must be his key virtue. It was a good policy for the swift 'escalade aux cimes', for obedience to one of an ardent nature even uncomplicated by pride, must soon uncover one's contrary fragility. There soon has to be the fall into humility; but 'all is a purchase, all is a prize', and it is all on the way up. So 'littleness' has to be learnt. Brother Ivo decides, 'Mon calvaire à moi, c'est de me faire tout petit'. Deliberately, too, he studies those other specialists in the Way of Littleness—she of Lisieux, Céline of the Presentation, Benigna Consolata and others. They are all of them scandals to our involved contemporary prides. The word 'little' can be very misleading. These 'little ones' are only 'little' because they are not egoists. The real contrast is between the 'hollow men' of pride and egoism and these others, so solidly, if finally incandescently *lovers*. They are apt material, then, both for the sculpting of suffering and for the fire of charity, and thus they learn, perhaps very fast, the art and science of 'abandon', which is one's adjustment to both the sculpting and the fire.

1 *Un fruit de Saint Abandon: Frere Yves Poussin*. By F. M. Bernard, p. 88 (my italics).

The steady sight of humility and much vigour of will are necessary. 'Pray for me', writes Brother Ivo, 'for that humility which will make me mistrust myself, and trust God's Providence *more vigorously*.'¹ There is already the mountaineer's poise, the balance among risks, the awareness both of the self-mistrust and of the strength needed to proceed by God's will alone, that is 'abandon'. So 'abandon' is rather to walk a tightrope, or an arête; it is not to drift, or even float. Neither is all this mere barren expertise, as the lover needs not to be told, though it was probably with a premonition of suffering that Brother Ivo wrote—'May the cross bring me on again to life—yes, to life to love that springs out of and grows on sacrifice.'

It all happened very fast. Already in poor health, Brother Ivo, unprofessed, was exhausted pushing an empty wheelbarrow going to fetch clover for the white rabbits. There were various and heavy ailments to minimize. And for a long though privately dreadful time 'an Israelite without guile', of candour and a ready smile, a 'quicksilver type' can get away with heroism unsuspected. By 1927 Brother Ivo was riddled with unsuspected T.B., skeleton-thin and still working. Then, after a certain fantastic day of smiling heroism helping with the harvest, there came, that night, the first and violent haemorrhage. His condition was found to be inoperable. He had a year to live—living—or dying the same sort of variable or miscellaneous martyrdom that Thérèse of Lisieux found that T.B. could be—without drugs.

For two hours one night Brother Ivo talked with one of the community about 'abandon'. His Abbot, Dom Vital Lehodey, had written the classic treatise on the subject, but both the old man and the young were experts. There was plenty to discuss in 'abandon'. 'C'est tout simplement de vivre la mystère de la volonté du Père dans l'Esprit du Christ qui l'opère avec nous. Au fond c'est toujours l'oraison de quiétude poursuivie à tous les instants de la journée.'² There it is, but only gradually does life gather to such a richness.

'Abandon' is the tranquillity of perfect order, in which, at its height, each day for the child of God is an adventure of love. This is a height for the holy, of any age. It needs a great suppleness and humility to begin to understand. And yet, perhaps, it is even we who are given such a burning-glass of an idea, we who in the

² *La Mission de Dom Vital Lehodey*. Vallery-Radot. Ed. Cerf. p. 200.

flux of our confusing world need to learn so very various an expertise in Von Hugel's 'maximum attachment and maximum detachment' in the search for the will of God. There may well be a long search for the will of God. There may well be a long search of or pursuit by God, nowadays, of kinds so diversified and perhaps so poignant, that only the secret of 'abandon' will offer an issue.

But it is, of course, an open secret, and can be learnt. It is what made our Lord say, 'My food is to do the will of my Father'. Brother Ivo echoes him: 'As for me, I am content to worship and love God's will, I feed on it all day and lie on it at night. I have plenty of cause to do so.'³ Brother Ivo had become a professional of suffering. And he was far to outstrip and now may properly lead the slower practitioners.

Suffering may be a 'profession', even alongside other 'professions' whether religious or secular and whether the suffering is hidden or not. It is 'professional' if it is dealt with steadily and objectively, whether in the qualified surrender of agony or in the more habitual attitude of the erect and rectified mind and will. The correct relations with the phenomenon pain and its setting in the will of God have been established and are maintained. These relations normally postulating grace, which may be raised to any intensity.

Grace, of course, finds and fires the lover. 'I have come to love and want nothing else', wrote Brother Ivo, 'but this precious state of being utterly crushed,' (*anéantissement*) 'which day by day makes me ready for the more total detachment.'⁴ He meant, surely, the detachment of death. Death is, after all, the logical end of our sublunar suffering; conclusion and goal and seal; and the finished professional may well have something to say about it. Brother Ivo was crushed indeed, in a winepress of agony. His paroxysms shook the room. Death delayed around the corner. The Abbot used to say in these last months, 'One could see him growing, thanks to Holy "Abandon"', and 'he has done more in four years of religious life than many do in forty.'

He died very peacefully early in the morning of ninth March, 1928, aged twenty-six. 'I'm not going to be a "rentier" in heaven,' he had said, 'don't you worry! I shall apply to our Lady and I shall see alright in her eyes if that is what God wants.'

And so, indeed, it seems to be working out.

3 *Un Fruit*. p. 126. (writer's Tr.).

4 *Op. cit.*, p. 131.

ST AUGUSTINE'S SERMON ON PSALM XXXIII—III

TRANSLATED BY EDMUND HILL, O.P.

THE eyes of the Lord are upon the just'; no need to be afraid then of your difficulties; the Lord's eyes are on you. 'And his ears are open to their prayers.' What more could you want? If the complaints of a slave in a large household didn't reach the head of the family, he would have something further still to complain about, and say: 'What we have to put up with here, and nobody takes any notice of us!' You cannot say about God, can you, 'The things I endure and no one takes any notice'?—Well, if he did take any notice of me, perhaps you will say, he would remove my troubles for me. I clamour and I am in trouble.—You just keep to his ways, and when you are in trouble, he will notice it. But he is a doctor, and there is still something or other festering in you. You yell, but he goes on cutting, and he doesn't ease off until he has cut as much as he considers necessary. Indeed, it is the doctor who takes any notice of a man's yells and spares the festering wound, that is the cruel one. How mothers scrub their children in the baths! Don't the little things just howl under their hands! And do you call the mothers cruel because they don't pay any attention to their tears and let them off? On the contrary, surely, they are just full of mother-love. Yet the little boys bellow, and are not let off. In the same way our God is full of charity. But he appears not to listen to us, so that he can cure us and spare us for eternity.

'The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and his ears are open to their prayers.' So the bad men say, perhaps, 'It's quite safe then for me to do wrong, because the eyes of the Lord aren't on me. God is busy just now with the just, he isn't looking at me, so whatever I do I can do safely.' The Holy Ghost knows the way men's minds work, so he added immediately: 'But the Lord's countenance is upon those who do wrong, to efface their memory from the earth'.

'The just clamoured and the Lord heard them out, and pulled them out of all their troubles.' The three young men were just;¹ they clamoured to the Lord from the fiery furnace, and the

¹ Dan. iii, 49.

flames cooled off as they sang his praises. The fire could not approach and harm the innocent and just young men as they praised God, and he pulled them out of the fire. Someone will say, 'There you do have a case of some just men who were really listened to. But I have clamoured, and he hasn't pulled *me* out. Either then I am not just, either I am not doing what he tells me, or perhaps he doesn't see me.' Don't worry, just do what he tells you, and if he doesn't pull you out bodily, he certainly will spiritually. He rescued the three young men from the fire, but did he rescue the Maccabees² from the fire too? The one lot sang hymns in the flames, the others died in the flames. Wasn't the God of the three young men also the God of the Maccabees? He pulled one lot out but not the other. He saved the three young men in such a way that even the fleshly, worldly-minded were flabbergasted. But he refrained from saving the Maccabees in that way, so that their persecutors, who thought they had suppressed God's martyrs, would have all the severer punishment. He pulled Peter out, when he was chained in prison and the angel came and said to him, 'Get up and go out',³ and the chains were suddenly broken and he followed the angel out. But you don't suppose Peter had stopped being a just man, do you, when God did not save him later on from the cross? And didn't he in fact save him, then, too? Of course he did. Or do you think he lived a long time merely in order to become unjust? Perhaps he heard him to better effect the second time, when he pulled him out of all his afflictions, than the first time, when he saved him from prison only to endure so much later on. The second time God sent him where he could never suffer wrong any more.

'The Lord is beside those who have bruised their hearts, and he will bring the humble of spirit safely through.' God is high up, the Christian must be humble and lowly. If he wants the high God to be his neighbour, he must humble himself low down. This is a great mystery, brothers. God is high above everything; you draw yourself up to your full height and you still cannot reach him; you humble yourself and he comes down to you in person. 'Many are the troubles of the just.' Did he ever say, 'The reason Christians should be just and listen to my words, is to avoid having troubles'? He never made any such promise. What

² II Macc. vi, 3.

³ Acts xii, 7.

he did say is, 'Many are the troubles of the just'. Indeed, if they are unjust they may well have fewer troubles; if they are just, many. But the others, after few or no troubles will come into everlasting trouble; while the just will come after many troubles into everlasting peace, where they will never suffer any wrong again.

'The Lord preserves all their bones, and not one of them shall be crushed.' This should not be taken literally either, brothers. Bones are the firmness of the faithful. As our bones make for firmness in our bodies, so faith makes for firm qualities in a Christian soul. The patience and endurance which come with faith are the soul's inner bones. It is these bones which cannot be broken. 'Not one of them shall be crushed.' If he said this about our Lord, as is also foreshadowed somewhere else, where there is talk about killing the lamb, and it says, 'Do not break a bone of it', then it *was* fulfilled literally in his case, because when they came and found him dead on the cross already, they did not break his legs, to fulfil what was written.⁴ But this promise was made to Christians as well as Christ. The Lord preserves all their bones, not one of them shall be broken. So, brothers, if we see some good holy man in trouble, and so cut about by a doctor, for example, or so beaten up in a persecution that his bones are broken, we must not say, 'This man cannot have been just, because the Lord promised his just ones he would preserve all their bones'. Do you want it proved that he meant other bones, which I call the firm qualities of faith, namely, patience and endurance in all troubles? You can see it illustrated in the story of our Lord's passion. He was crucified with two thieves, one on either side of him. One jeered at him, the other believed in him; one was condemned, the other justified; one had his punishment both here and in the next world, the other was told by our Lord: 'Amen I tell you, you shall be in paradise with me today'.⁵ Yet both of them had their legs broken. So there you are; couldn't he have preserved the good thief's bones? The Lord answers: 'I did indeed preserve them, because the firmness of his faith could not be broken by the blows which broke his legs'.

'The death of sinners is the worst possible.' Now remember brothers all that I have been saying. Truly the Lord is great, and

4 John xix, 33.

5 Luke xxiii, 43.

great is his mercy, who truly gave us his body to eat, in which he suffered for us, and his blood to drink. How do you suppose he regards nasty-minded people who say, 'That man died a horrid death, eaten by beasts; he can't have been a just man, that's why he came to such an unpleasant end'? He wouldn't have died, of course otherwise eh? And so the other man who dies at home in his bed is just, is he?—That's exactly what puzzles me; I know all about his wicked deeds, yet he died a good death in his own home, not being carried off in his prime, or dying an exile in a distant land.—But listen; 'the death of sinners is the worst possible'. What you consider a good death is the worst possible, if you could only see inside. You only see the outside, the man lying in his bed; can you see inside, where he is being carried off to hell? Listen, brothers, and discover from the gospel what is the worst possible death. There were two men, weren't there, one rich, clothed in purple and fine linen, who used to feast sumptuously every day; the other poor, who used to lie at the rich man's gate covered with sores which the dogs used to come and lick, and he longed to be filled with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. It happened that the poor man died (he was a just man, this poor fellow) and was carried away by angels to Abraham's bosom.⁶ But people who saw his body lying at the rich man's doorstep with no one to bury it, what do you suppose they were saying? 'So may that enemy of mine perish; oh, to see that man who torments me lying like this!' His body is desecrated and spat on, there is a stench from its wounds—and he is at rest in Abraham's bosom. If we are Christians we must believe it, if we don't believe it brothers, don't let us pretend to be Christians. Faith is our guide. Things are as our Lord said they are. Or is what the astrologers tell you true, and what Christ tells you untrue? And what sort of death did the rich man die? A splendid one, you may be sure, a most magnificent death in purple and fine linen. And what a funeral he would have had, what spices to bury his corpse in! But he was in hell in torment, and when he wanted just a drop of water to drip on his tongue from the finger of the despised poor man, he did not obtain it. So learn what it really means to say 'the death of sinners is the worst possible', and don't judge by the beds draped in fine covers, and the body wrapped in a small fortune, and the official mourners, and the weeping

6 Luke xvi, 19.

family, the crowd escorting the body on its way, and the marble gilded monument. If you go by these things, they will mislead you into thinking that the death—not of slight sinners, but of really wicked men, is the best possible, seeing that they have managed to die and be buried in such style. Judge instead by the gospel, and it will show your faith the rich man's soul burning in the punishments of hell, not helped in the least by the last honours and services which the vanity of the living has paid his dead body.

But there are many different sorts of sinners, and not to be a sinner is hard, perhaps indeed impossible in this life; so he goes on immediately to explain just what sort of sinners have the worst possible death. 'And those who hate the just one, he says, shall fail.'⁷ What just one, if not him who justifies the ungodly? What just one, if not the Lord Jesus Christ, who is also the appeasement for our sins?⁸ Those who hate *him* then have the worst possible death, because they die in their sins, not being reconciled through him to our God. For 'the Lord will redeem his servants' souls'. Death whether the worst possible or the best, is to be understood as it affects the soul, not as it happens to overtake the body in what men consider mean or magnificent circumstances. 'And all who hope in him shall not fail.' There is the limited measure of human justice and virtue for you; since this mortal life, whatever progress we make in it, cannot be free from serious shortcomings, at least let it not fail in this, hoping in him namely, in whom is the remission of sins, Amen.

⁷ Rom. iv, 5.

⁸ I John ii, 2.

KNOWLEDGE OF OUR END

PÈRE LALLEMANT

TRANSLATED BY HUGH FARMER, O.S.B.

Introductory Note

Louis Lallemant, born in 1587, was educated by the Jesuits, and entered the Society of Jesus at the age of eighteen. After his tertianship he taught philosophy for three years, mathematics for four, and theology (in two periods) for five. From 1622 till 1625 he was novice-master and from 1628 till 1630 master of the tertianship. From 1631 till 1633 he was prefect of higher studies at Bourges and in 1634 rector of the same college. He had long suffered from ill-health, and he died there in 1635, aged only forty-seven, greatly esteemed for his holiness and his excellent spiritual influence.

He was described by a contemporary as being 'of tall stature and majestic bearing; he had a wide, benign forehead and chestnut coloured hair, but was beginning to grow bald. His face was oval and of good proportions, his complexion swarthy . . . His eyes were full of an attractive kindliness, and they revealed both his sureness of judgment and his perfect equanimity. . . . You could find no-one physically better made than him, no-one more exteriorly devout and recollected, no-one more composed in all his movements.'

Père Lallemant died without publishing his spiritual teaching, but it was to become as widely appreciated as that of P. Baltasar Alvarez, representing the mystical aspirations of the Order to which they both belonged. The *Doctrine Spirituelle* was not published until 1694 when it was edited and arranged from the notes of Lallemant's disciples, P. Rigoleuc and P. Surin, by P. Champion, S.J. Much of the work consists of tertianship teaching; the special purpose of the conferences and the quality of the audience should not be forgotten by the reader. These explain the simple style and elements of the outlook such as occasional exaggeration and a general stressing of the moral rather than the intellectual aspects; from time to time too elements of the then prevailing rigorism are apparent. Nevertheless Bremond described the work as 'one of the three or four principal books of modern religious literature', and declared that 'as a grammar of mysticism and an initiation into the contemplative life no other work should be preferred to it.' (Cf. *Histoire littéraire du Sentiment Religieux en France*, V, 64.)

These extracts are translated from A. Pottier's edition of La Vie et la Doctrine Spirituelle du P. Louis Lallemant (Paris, 1924).

I—Only God can make us happy.

There is a void in our hearts which creatures alone cannot fill; it can be filled only by God who is our beginning and our end. The possession of God fills this void and makes us happy; the privation of God leaves us in emptiness and makes us unhappy.

Before God fills this void he sets us on the path of faith under these conditions: if we always consider him as our last end, if we use creatures with moderation and relate our use of them to his service, and if we contribute faithfully to the glory he wills to derive from all creatures, he will give himself to us, fill our emptiness and make us happy. But if we are unfaithful to him, he will leave us in emptiness; because this is unsatisfied, it will bring us supreme misery.

* * *

Creatures try to take the place of the last end; we ourselves are the first to wish to be our own last end. A creature says to us: 'Come to me and I will fill you.' We believe this, but it is a lie. Then more creatures come, one after the other, making the same promise; they deceive us in the same way, and will do so all our lives. From all sides creatures call to us and promise to fill us; all these promises are nothing but lies, but we are always ready to let ourselves be deceived. It is as if the whole sea-bed were empty, and someone tried to fill it with a handful of water. Hence we are never content: when we are attached to creatures, they separate us far from God and cast us into a sea of difficulties, trouble and unhappiness. These qualities are as inseparable from creatures as joy, peace and happiness are inseparable from God.

* * *

We are like people who have so much distaste for food that they taste one dish and then leave it, touch another at once and leave that too; and in the end they are pleased with none. And we too throw ourselves on all kinds of objects but can be satisfied with none of them, for God alone is the sovereign good who can make us truly happy. We deceive ourselves when we say: 'if I were in such and such a place and had this or that occupation, I would be happy. So and so is happy because he has got all he

wants.' All this is futile. If you were Pope, you would not be happy. Let us seek God and seek him alone; only he can satisfy all our desires.

* * *

In old times the devil disguised himself as God and was represented to pagans by idols as the author and end of all that is in the world. Creatures do something similar. They disguise themselves as God and make us believe that they will please us by satisfying our desires. But in reality all they give us only increases our emptiness further. We do not feel this at present; in the next life we will feel it most acutely, when the soul, separated from its body, has an almost infinite desire to be filled by God. If this desire is frustrated of fulfilment, we must undergo suffering which is almost infinite.

* * *

On our death-bed we will realise how disastrously we have let ourselves be deceived and bewitched by creatures. We shall be astonished at how we have consented to lose great and precious realities in exchange for others that are trivial and unworthy. The punishment for this foolish conduct will be the temporary deprivation of the vision of God, without which nothing can satisfy the soul. The desire to see and possess him is quite inconceivable; so too is the suffering caused by this desire if it is left unsatisfied.

That is why we must decide to renounce generously all the plans we make for ourselves, all merely human points of view, all desires and expectations for what satisfies our self-esteem, and, in general, everything which can be an obstacle to God's glory. This is what Scripture calls walking before God, having an upright heart, walking in truth and seeking God with all one's heart. Without this renunciation we shall never be content.

* * *

Why do we attach ourselves to creatures as we do? They are so limited and so empty of any permanent good that all the pleasure and happiness we promise ourselves from them is vain and imaginary; it only increases our hunger instead of satisfying it, because our appetite, being infinite, can only be satisfied by the possession of the sovereign good. Moreover creatures do not live long but soon leave us, or else we have to leave them. As for other men, why do we not realize that they love themselves only,

and seek in everything nothing but their own interests? They carefully keep for themselves the little wealth, credit and authority which they have; even when they are rich in all these things, they act no differently. All that they do not do purely for the love of God they do for self-esteem, and in all their work for others they never forget themselves. They are favourable, loyal and friendly to us only for their own advantage; what trust can we have in their favour and friendship?

II—Our happiness depends on our complete subjection to God, who alone should reign in our hearts.

Our true greatness consists in our subjection to God. We depend on him in three ways. First, it is only by him that we can exist at all. Secondly, it is only from him that we can have the *means* to attain him. Thirdly, we cannot possess our *end* and sovereign good except from him. In this matter the ancient philosophers were in error: for they sought happiness in themselves and in human things.

* * *

Only God has sovereign rights over our hearts. Neither the State nor even the Church extend their rule as far as this: what takes place in our hearts is no concern of theirs.¹ God alone is king of the human heart, the heart is his kingdom, and there he sets up the throne of his grace. His glory consists in this interior rule. Our perfection and happiness consist in the subjection of our hearts to this dominion of God. The more our hearts are subject to him, the more perfect and happy we shall be.

* * *

God works more assiduously at the supernatural government of a heart where he reigns than at the natural government of the whole universe and the civil government of States. God cares only for souls: provided he sees them subject to his power and possessed by him, he is content. Moreover only God can content our hearts; our emptiness can be filled by him alone.

* * *

God delights to commune with the heart of man. Here he finds a resting-place, and, conversely, God alone is the centre of men's hearts, which should rest only in him, and beat only for

¹ When Lallemand wrote, this opinion was quite tenable, but nowadays it is certain that the Church *can* order certain interior actions.

him. The interior life is a truly happy life, for it makes God alone live in our hearts, it makes our hearts live in God alone and delight only in him. Happy is the life of a soul where God reigns, and which he possesses entirely! It is a life separated from the world and hidden in God, a life of love and holy liberty, a life which enables the soul to find in the kingdom of God its joy and its peace, its glory, its true pleasure and its permanent greatness. These are the goods and riches which the world can neither give nor take away.

* * *

We imagine that someone given to recollection and the interior life leads a sad and unhappy life. The reality is quite the contrary. Happiness, even on earth, consists in possessing God: the more we renounce ourselves to be united to him, the more we cease to be miserable and become truly happy. But the devil takes advantage of our ignorance and weakness to cast us into continual errors and anxieties. We must escape from these to make ourselves capable of the sovereign happiness of this life, which consists in seeing God and enjoying the gift of his holy presence, without which even the highest of the Seraphim would be unhappy. A soul which contemplated God unceasingly and held itself always ready to accomplish his will, would be truly happy.



EXTRACTS

PÈRE M. D. CHENU, O.P., in an article translated in *CROSS CURRENTS* (Vol. 7, No. 2, Broadway, New York) points out that after all sorts of other theologies, such as the theology of war, of business, of history, have been worked out since the Reformation, it is only now in our own day that anyone has given thought to 'the theology of work'. And in the article he sets the object of human labour in perspective for true theologians to consider.

Man and the Universe: work is located at their junction, as well as at the junction of spirit and matter. Man is master of the universe: the place of God, the vocation of man, according to the formulas revealed in *Genesis*. This should be seen not as an initial pre-historic

episode, but in a cosmic unfolding of the divine plan. Man is a collaborator in creation, and the demi-urge of his evolution in discovery, exploitation, and the spiritualization of nature. This action on nature (work) is a divine participation, even in its risk. . . . Finally, the *Incarnation*. God made man; everything that is human is material for grace; it enters there twice, both as work of man, and as principle of community, which is also a world of grace. The Incarnation continued: the Mystical Body, this theme which from now on will be classic for a spirituality in which the world will find its equilibrium and its Christian position. . . .

Is this a new spirituality? No, it is that of *Genesis*, St Paul, St Thomas and of our primary dogmas. . . . For too long Christians have not taken into their consciousness these implicit powers, and their spirituality, like their apostolate, has contracted into 'the interior life'.

Certainly today Christians, here and there, are at last struggling to synthesize a spirituality of the interior life with the spirituality of the community, of society, and so of work, by re-introducing the basic truth of the Mystical Body and the basic action of the liturgy. But it is a difficult task. Donald Thornton tackles the task firmly in the June issue of *Spiritual Life* (Quarterly, Brooklin, U.S.A.):

A more mature and socially efficacious spiritual growth can take place in the average layman by *not* withdrawing from society. . . . Since the layman is in and of the world he must proceed to God through the world. . . . Of course the cycle is not complete, nor will our sanctity be complete when we return to contemplation. But the important point is that we must not neglect or underestimate the potential of spiritual growth open to us through action.

Later in the article Mr Thornton begins to apply these principles to details, in order to avoid the dangers of activism and 'the heresy of action'.

But there is always the danger that we may falsely identify our interior life as 'spiritual' and the exterior life as 'secular', when in actuality our exterior life must be an extension of our inner spirituality into the world. . . . The fount of life for the priest, religious or layman engaged in social action is to be found in contemplation and the liturgy, but because these essential acts are vivifying they impel the social actionist to further action and greater efforts.

The synthesis of action and contemplation is certainly one of the problems of today when we are confronted with so many who are almost wholly involved in 'good works' and others too ready to run away from everything and become simply 'contemplatives'. We have to find a way of infusing contemplation in to the actionist, and provid-

ing channels of action for the contemplatives. It is good to find the problem tackled so well in these journals.

The Editor of the Quarterly *Mount Carmel* declares one of the principal ways of achieving this synthesis to be by way of the retreat movement (Summer 1957). As he says it in the primary movement behind Catholic Action. And yet the modern retreat must loose some of the shackles of nineteenth-century formalism if it is to achieve the 'community' effect of the true spiritual growth of the soul. It is true enough for the Editor to write:

When Christ had ascended into heaven the apostles, the future pillars of the Church, retired to the Cenacle where for a period of ten days they persevered in prayer with Mary the Mother of God, awaiting the coming of the Holy Ghost. It was in the Cenacle that the Retreat Movement was born. Were it not for that first retreat the apostles would not . . . have become founders of Christ's Mystical Body on earth.

But the gathering of our Lady and the apostles in the upper room was rather different from the average retreat. There it was a common action, they were all together persevering in prayer. Here we foster an individualistic spirit of piety in most of our retreats; the retreatants look down their noses at each other, find anything like a Dialogue Mass distracting to their own interior prayer, and have nothing to do with anyone except God and the preacher of the retreat. The retreat movement in this country will have to change considerably before it becomes the power it could be in sanctifying action for the apostolate in our own society.



REVIEWS

COMMUNAL LIFE. 'Religious Life' Series, No. 8. (Blackfriars, London; 19s. 6d.)

This is an excellent translation of the conferences given in France to a group of religious women and those who have to deal with them. Like the other volumes in the series, they attain a very high standard and will prove of great use to all who study the theory and practice of the religious state. Attempts have been made in recent years, even among Catholics, to question the utility and meaning of the religious state in an age when the lay apostolate is so much to the fore. These conferences provide an answer. The theme which runs through them all, and which is dear to the organizers of these reunions, is that the religious life is not something parallel to the ordinary practice of

Christianity, an extra added on, as it were, and in no way essential. Rather is the religious community a model of the Christian community as a whole, enriching it and giving it visible expression. It is 'a miniature Church within the Church' according to the Cistercians of the twelfth century. Thus the justification of the religious state is based on the idea of the Church as a community, and of the incapacity of man to attain his proper perfection save as a member of a community. The religious community being an image of the Church, it was a happy idea to begin with a conference on that image which the Church cast *before* her, the Old Israel. This is given by an acknowledged master of the subject, Father Albert Gelin, known to English readers by his *Key Concepts of the Old Testament*. There follow three essays by a Monk, a Friar Preacher and a Jesuit, on three of the best-known forms of religious life. These all contain much that is valuable, but perhaps the richest of all is the Conference on 'The Theology of the Common Life' by the Carmelite Father Paul Marie de la Croix. All of this requires careful reading and meditation. It will be repaid in full. Dom Juglar on 'The Mass and Office in the Common Life' is quite a mine of early Christian texts, while Father René Carpentier, S.J., has some interesting things to say on the place of religious life in the Church today and the meaning of the Counsels in the modern world. This essay, too, will repay careful study. Dom Feligondes's article will provide evidence of the generosity which French Catholics of today can show if given a lead. Others can do as much. The article on 'Motives for entering the Cenobitic Life', written from the point of view of the psychologist by Dr Rousset, may be of interest to some.

In general the conferenciers are to be congratulated on having sought to make a positive contribution to the subject, and to have kept criticism of certain well-known aberrations of the spirit of religious life to a minimum. In an increasingly critical world, which accepts no institution, however venerable, without demanding the why and the wherefore, they have made a most praiseworthy effort to answer the problems which His Eminence Cardinal Valerio Valeri, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, raises in his foreword. We owe much to them, and to the publishers who have put this excellent series at the disposition of the English-speaking public.

RICHARD BLUNDELL, S.J.

STARS OF COMFORT. Conferences of Father Vincent McNabb. (Burns, Oates; 15s.)

One wonders how many more spiritual and theological treasures are still hidden away in Miss Finlayson's shorthand notes. Again we express our gratitude for another Father Vincent book. A new book,

a new collection, but in reality an addition to an old collection of his retreat conferences and sermons. It is fourteen years since Father Vincent's death, but those who were privileged to know him can hear his voice again by reading this new series, for the style is of speaking and not of writing; therefore it is much more really Father Vincent. For those who never knew him there is much here to ponder. That was the original intention. The words were spoken to be pondered upon during a retreat. Not pleasant sentimental sermons as might possibly be suggested by the collection title, but strong theology strongly taught. The sayings of our Lord are the stars of comfort, and often enough it is a very different comfort that the worldly-minded would expect. The conferences are not in ordered series as he preached them. They are taken from a variety of times and places. The compiler has introduced an attractive order by grouping similar subjects under main headings—God's call, the way, the means, principles of the spiritual life, etc. One may dip here and there, begin the book at the end, or even break into the middle of a conference and still find purposeful teaching and useful advice. Father Vincent's thought must have been logical and consecutive, but it is often hard to see the argued line of demonstration, a fact which can be ascertained in other notable preachings which have afterwards been set down. The time, the place, the hearers might provide the explanation of the apparent gaps. For all that, no one will complain, because all will be grateful enough to hear Father Vincent's voice again.

DONALD PROUDMAN, O.P.

THE STORY OF A SOUL. The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux.

Edited by Mother Agnes of Jesus. Translated, with a critical Preface, by Michael Day, CONG. ORAT. (Burns and Oates; 2s. 6d.)

Fr Michael Day's translation of St Thérèse of Lisieux's autobiography is already well known. This third edition, remarkably cheap for the present day, is to be welcomed, except perhaps for the rather dreadful picture on the cover. Fr Day has written a new Preface, explaining at some length the history of the original manuscripts and of their editing after the saint's death by her elder sister, Mother Agnes of Jesus. While holding that it would have been impossible to publish the unedited originals at that time, he admits that Mother Agnes, in carrying out her sister's wishes, did not, in her manner of doing so, conform to certain generally recognized literary standards. Now that the recent publication of the original manuscripts makes comparison possible, 'it is a matter of regret', says Fr Day, 'that the exact nature of the editorial work carried out by Mother Agnes was not made clear when this edition was first published.'

This translation, in good, readable English, should do much to dispel the illusion of the 'Little Flower' as a deplorable example of insipid and mawkish sentimentality. Behind the girlish 'prettiness' there is real childlike simplicity joined to a wisdom and understanding beyond her years. Her strength of character and heroic courage brought her in a very short time to an astonishing spiritual maturity that bears the stamp of authentic sanctity.

This cheap edition should help to make the saint more fully and more widely understood.

L.S.

A TREATISE ON THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. By St Vincent Ferrer, O.P.; with a commentary by Ven. Mother Julianne Morrell, O.P. Translated by the Dominican Nuns, Corpus Christi Monastery, Memlo Park, California. (Blackfriars Publications, London; 12s. 6d.)

This volume is not one book but two. These two books are linked together, for Mother Juliana Morell was commenting on the well-known treatise of St Vincent Ferrer. Nevertheless one realizes very quickly that there is a great difference between them. While it is true that the Treatise is 'full of virile piety' (p. 7), the Commentary is clearly the product of a female mind. It is not wanting in 'learning'; Mother Juliana read the writings of many Fathers of the Church and gathered from them interesting and useful quotations, but they are put together in a mechanical and unimaginative way. Moreover the Commentary bears witness to the need for theological knowledge in a commentator on the Treatise. A theologically trained commentator would have been a little more sparing in the use of the word 'virtue', especially in reference to what, on St Thomas' showing, cannot be given that name (silence, fear, poverty, etc.). He would also refrain from stating that fear will survive even in heaven (p. 164). The preface to this volume leads a reader to expect much, for he is told that 'nothing has been left undone to render this edition as correct as possible'. His expectation will be short-lived, for he will discover that only one half of the quotations is identified, others are left without any indication. In addition to this he will be disappointed to find several misprints and the division of chapters will strike him in places as infelicitous. He will wonder several times about the translation to which 'no less attention has been given'. Despite all pains, it is unattractive and heavy; in places it is content to make no sense and at least once it is marred by a howler. These defects cause a reviewer real sadness, for the Treatise of St Vincent deserves to be known and studied and, above all, practised.

C.V.

THE RED BOOK OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH. By Albert Galter. (H. M. Gill and Sons, Dublin; 30s.)

'The aim of this book is to give a summary but well-documented account of the persecution of the Catholic Church by the Communist Governments . . .'. The publication, which has set itself this task, has accomplished it; in this sense it is a success. It is to be read not only as a 'successful' book in the sense indicated, but also because the bishops of this country, at the request of the highest authorities in the Church, have encouraged their children in faith to read it. When reading it, however, the readers will do well to bear in mind what the book is not trying to do. It is not trying to draw attention to the fundamental issues, to the spiritual conflict between good and evil, the struggle of the 'father of lies' against the God who is Truth. Hence its inevitable limitations: it could give the impression that the persecution of the Church is just the persecution of one social organism by another, and that the members of the persecuted body are painfully surprised at this lack of toleration. The statistical and historical approach may still further enforce this impression, which can be at most only a part of the whole story. For each Christian by becoming a disciple of his crucified master accepts his words: 'Blessed are those who suffer persecution in the cause of right; the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are you when men revile you and speak all manner of evil against you falsely, because of me.' This does not mean that the persecuted Church should not defend itself by trying to enlist the support of all who are interested in the defence of the liberties of man. What it means is rather that it is the persecution of the Church which is a normal condition of our beatitude, not its absence. Therefore in drawing attention to persecution, it would be only fitting to place it in a theological as well as in a social and political setting, and only right to make sure that mere interpretations of events are not presented as incontrovertible facts. Some of the minor theses are not incontrovertible: for instance, not all Czech and Slovak Catholics will accept the view that the Catholic Church in their country before the *coup d'état* enjoyed only 'a certain liberty in the exercise of the sacred ministry'. It is true that some of the measures of the coalition Government before 1948 were not designed to promote religious well-being, but the religious blindness of liberal politicians should not be put together with the deliberately anti-religious hatred of the Communists. One correction is also needed in the discussion of the situation in Slovakia between 1944-48; the situation then was not so black-and-white as the book suggests, and in some ways it was very grey indeed. How far similar corrections are called for in the case of other countries whose sad plight is discussed here depends on intimate knowledge of local

conditions. Yet despite the corrections one would like to see made, one feels that the members of the still vocal Church ought to read and to ponder this report about the silent Church.

C.V.

MASTERY AND MERCY: A Study of Two Religious Poems. By Philip M. Martin. (Oxford University Press; 15s.)

Canon Martin's study of *The Wreck of the Deutschland* and *Ash Wednesday* is written for people 'without specialist knowledge', for Christians chiefly who might not normally read these poems—or possibly any poems—at all. 'My aim was not only to open to people the pure enjoyment of the poetry itself, but also that the deep Christian truths expressed imaginatively by the two poets might be allowed to strike deep into souls.' Literary criticism, he would claim, is largely concerned with pure enjoyment and is suspicious of a 'committed' standpoint; but though these are both 'committed' poems (i.e. written 'from within the Church'), it seems to me that they lose almost as much by being considered, as here, simply from the religious point of view without much reference to their life as poems: criticism of this kind is bound to be rather one-dimensional. *Ash Wednesday*, in particular, suffers from being over-simplified in terms of a rather narrow orthodoxy: it is a far more ambiguous poem, and meant to be, than Canon Martin's rather bowdlerized version would allow. And is it telling us much to say, for instance, that Hopkins 'must have lain and looked with love at the breaking waves'?

But probably Canon Martin would agree with all this; after all, it is only to say that any poem analysed down into prose gets desiccated in the process. What matters about this book is that it really does help us to understand these poems, and poetry, as the author so rightly insists, is important for the Christian as a means of bringing truth to his imagination and affections as well as to his mind. If the best thing to do after reading this charmingly humble book is to forget about it and go and read the poems again, Canon Martin will surely feel that this is what he wanted.

H.O'D.

A PATH THROUGH GENESIS. By Bruce Vawter, C.M. (Sheed and Ward; 18s.)

The proof of the pudding is in the eating thereof. It has been the reviewer's good fortune to be able to study the impact of this book on two educated laymen. Both were captivated by it, and neither was willing to drop it before getting to the end; which is more than can be said of most non-fictional writing.

So, at last, we have in English an introduction to and brief but useful commentary on the first and basic book of the Bible. Here is a 'path through Genesis' which we can thoroughly recommend as a beginning. The whole text is examined, section by section; and the text printed and commented on is that of the 'Confraternity Version' perhaps the most effective and accurate English translation of Genesis available at this time. In this way, too, we are made to sense the primacy of the text itself. We are not just talking about the Bible, but rather throwing light on the text which is always before us and written for our salvation.

After a thoughtful and necessary introduction on the interpretation of the Bible in general and Genesis in particular in the light of Catholic principles, we are then presented with the whole matter of Genesis in three sections. The primitive narratives, or Genesis I-II, are presented as 'The meeting of God and Man'. This is the theological, and so the soundest, viewpoint. Then we are given the patriarchal period down to Jacob or Israel, under the heading of 'Hebrew Beginnings'. This it was; both as regards God's designs in the inward development of his chosen people, and also because the Hebrew peoples first enter the stage of Near Eastern history, as it can be known, at the time of the early Patriarchs. Part Three is not so convincingly constructed. The story of Jacob is most fully written up, and the story of Joseph accounts for that sojourn in Egypt which was the necessary preliminary to Exodus. But the Exodus itself and the leadership of Moses were the next real beginning. Universal Jewish tradition has always sensed this, and Christian tradition too, because the Exodus is the classic type of our redemption.

However, our author had to divide up his matter—like Gaul—into three parts. More important is the fact that a path through Genesis has been traced. Next must come a book which will make this path into a well-lighted high-road, or, in other words, a full-blown Catholic commentary on Genesis, as up-to-date as in accord with the mind of the Church.

In the meantime, let us use the path to lessen that ignorance of Scripture which is not to the credit of English-speaking Catholics.

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.